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West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan: Roots. Pride. Vision.

Teska Associates
Bloomington, Illinois

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West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan



Roots. Pride. Vision.

The West Bloomington Task Force was convened in early 2008 by the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area and the City of Bloomington. The Task Force met regularly during the year. Throughout the planning process, members invited participation from other leaders through large community summits, resulting in broad representation from Bloomington organizations and residents, and an open and vigorous discussion of the neighborhood's future.

West Bloomington Task Force

Barbara Adkins, City of Bloomington
 Dennis Arnold, GAP Neighborhood Association
 Frank Beck, Illinois State University
 Darryl Brown, National City Bank
 John Burrill, Mid Central Community Action, Inc.
 Greg Donovan, AFNI
 Valerie Dumser, Olde Towne Neighborhood Association
 Sue Floyd, GAP Neighborhood Association
 Scott Fowler, McLean County Regional Planning
 Jamie France, Habitat for Humanity
 Deanna Frautschi, Country Financial
 Tom Fulop, Salvation Army
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 Bob Hunt, Illinois State University
 Tony Jones, McLean County Urban League
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Tom Laxton, Bloomington Public School District 87
 Lori Manning, State Farm Bank
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 Paul Russell, McLean County Regional Planning
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 Ken Springer, Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area
 Carolyn Steele, Olde Towne Neighborhood Association
 Mayor Steve Stockton, City of Bloomington
 Marty Vanags, Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area
 Sharon Walker, City of Bloomington
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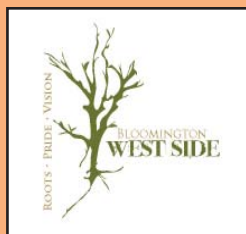
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Program for getting it done!



*Funding for this project was made possible by the generous support of the **City of Bloomington** and **State Farm Bank**.*

*Additional sponsors include the **Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area** and the **West Bloomington Task Force**.*

*And a special thanks to the **Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)**, whose quality-of-life planning process was used as a model for this plan.*



Proposed Westside Community Projects

This Plan maps out dozens of action projects for the Westside in the areas of community greening, youth, safety & well-being, economic development, housing and education.

Seizing Opportunities for Renewal

Our neighborhoods, Olde Towne and Gridley, Allin and Prickett (GAP), are long-established areas of Bloomington located directly west of downtown along Market Street. Our area is home to historic housing and long-standing churches, social service agencies and small businesses.

In 2007, community and business organizations representing the public, private and non-profit sectors started discussing the challenges confronting GAP and Olde Towne and the steps that could be taken to revitalize our community. This area was chosen as a target of study for a variety of reasons. First, the City's Comprehensive Plan identified the Westside as an area of concern and one in need of intervention. Second, a number of organizations had highlighted the real need to provide assistance and support to these neighborhoods. Third and finally, this area faces many unique challenges compared to the rest of the city.

As these conversations evolved into a more formal process, we realized that we must channel our energy into action to realize positive change. We formed the West Bloomington Task Force and hired a consultant, Teska Associates, Inc. to facilitate a planning process to achieve comprehensive community development.

THE WEST BLOOMINGTON TASK FORCE

The first meeting of the West Bloomington Task Force convened in February 2008 with more than 20 people in attendance, including participants from the City of Bloomington, the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area, State Farm Bank, several area companies, non-profit organizations and social service agencies, and the GAP and Olde Towne neighborhood associations. We made commitments to this neighborhood revitalization effort, which will serve as a model of change for other neighborhoods in the Bloomington-Normal area, and to empower our neighbors and fellow community members during this exciting process.

Our responsibilities on the Task Force included providing strategic guidance to the project, representing community desires, formulating strategies, serving as ambassadors to the community at-large, prioritizing improvement ideas, and acting as stewards of the



Historic homes can be found throughout our area and connect us to our heritage.

"Bloomington is the fastest growing metropolitan region in Illinois. But new growth cannot come at the expense of our older neighborhoods. We want a demonstration project to make an area as nice as anywhere else - a place where people want to live and work."

-Steve Stockton, Mayor of Bloomington & West Bloomington Task Force member

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Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church built a new facility and has plans to build a community center in the heart of our community

“This is all about being neighbors, and being willing to lend a helping hand.”

-Carolyn Steele, Olde Towne Neighborhood Association and West Bloomington Task Force member

planning process and to the final plan recommendations. At that first meeting we described how we envisioned our community in 10 years, using words like **vibrant, empowered, unique, diverse, friendly** and **safe** to describe our hopes and dreams for the future.

At subsequent Task Force meetings we added new members, including more local residents, representatives from educational institutions and regional governmental agencies. We created and implemented a community survey to begin accumulating information on the key issues in the minds of local residents. Using this information allowed us to identify certain themes on which to focus our attention: economic development, safety and housing, and youth and education.

VISION STATEMENT

We also crafted a vision statement, which reads as follows:

“Located in the heart of the city, West Bloomington will be characterized by its high quality-of-life, empowered residents and deep sense of pride. Through partnerships and strong associations, and building on the neighborhood’s history and diversity, West Bloomington will be home to new jobs, homes, and vibrant public gathering spaces in a safe and welcoming community.”

This vision will continue to guide the Task Force and the rest of the community in our work ahead.

THE KEY ISSUES IN OUR COMMUNITY

In May we hosted the first West Bloomington Community Summit. Before the Summit began, the Task Force took a walking tour led by GAP and Olde Towne residents and discussed issues pertaining to safety, housing, and economic development. After our walk, we discussed the importance of job creation, workforce training, financial counseling and access to educational and employment opportunities.

At the Community Summit, Mayor Steve Stockton, Alderman Karen Schmidt, McLean County State’s Attorney Bill Yoder, community building expert Jim Capraro, and Mt. Pisgah Pastor Frank McSwain, Sr. addressed the hundreds of community residents, members of the media and other interested stakeholders in attendance. We were inspired by the

commitment of so many people from our community to the health, safety and general welfare of our neighborhoods, by the success stories of comprehensive community development implemented elsewhere, and by the positive energy of our friends, neighbors and fellow community members. We broke up into three groups to each tackle a particular theme of interest: safety and housing, youth and education, and economic development. What follows is a summary of our discussions.

Safety

We discussed the strengths, issues and vision related to safety in our West side neighborhoods. In terms of strengths, we enjoy a strong sense of community and neighborliness, we have many hard-working people in the area, the police respond quickly to our safety issues, and our block parties offer opportunities for socialization. In terms of a vision, we imagine more monitoring of parks by police and neighbors, the introduction of community policing, and the creation of a website to share relevant safety information with each other. Our top goals for safety include building community trust, improving landlord/tenant communication and forming a neighborhood watch.

Housing

We have beautiful old homes in the neighborhood, reinvestment is being made in some houses, home ownership is prevalent among our older residents, and we have a variety of housing options. Our key housing issues include vacant lots and houses, absentee landlords, houses being used as storage facilities, inappropriate items lying around yards, tension between landlords and renters, and foreclosed properties. We imagine a neighborhood with affordable housing options, where properties are well-maintained, where streets have newly constructed curbs and sidewalks, where volunteers work on neighborhood beautification, and revitalized public housing. Our goals include more home ownership, affordable residential redevelopment and better code enforcement.

Youth

We spoke out about our hopes and dreams for our community's youth. We envision a future where our youth have access to safe, healthy and supportive recreational activities in which to engage; a sense of pride, self-respect, and self-confidence; strong social support, including mentors, affordable child care, peer groups and support for the parents of our youth; specific places to go to participate in structured and supportive activities



Members of our area gathered for the first Community Summit in May. The Pantagraph editorial board wrote on May 14, 2008, "By backing this study, the city and others involved are recognizing the efforts of residents and sharing in their commitment."

"It is clear that now is the right time for action. There is a good positive energy to do this."

-Heather Paul, Corporate Public Affairs/
Enterprise Community Development for
State Farm and West Bloomington Task
Force member

COMMUNITY PROFILE



Our area is blessed with quiet residential streets and stands of mature trees.

“The historic character of the neighborhood needs to be preserved...This was once a vibrant area for both residential and retail, and could be again with some effort and support.”

-Survey Respondent

- places such as a community center, youth facility, athletic/recreational center and summer camps; and active youth involvement in community life encompassing such activities as community gardening, internships, volunteering, intergenerational activities and participating in leadership opportunities and decision-making processes.

Education

We envision a West Bloomington community where all youth finish school and where the younger generations are empowered to fulfill their potential while helping each other along the way. We will equip ourselves with life skills education on such matters as critical thinking and decision-making, financial literacy, conflict resolution, parental training, employable skills, and computer/internet/technological instruction. Finally, we imagine a diversity of educational programming at a central community center where people of all ages could partake in classes, explore areas of self-interest, become involved in music and the arts, and interact with friends and neighbors.

Economic Development

We imagine a West Bloomington with a full grocery store, with retail stores up and down Market Street, nicer buildings for small businesses, jobs in the neighborhood, opportunities for the local workforce, and lots of pride! We want to offer support systems to residents of our community, create a project to hire ex-offenders, and develop skilled employees. We will capitalize on traffic from the far west side, improve our incomes, create a facade rebate program, and transform each other into key stakeholders.

OUR HISTORY

The first settlers arriving to “Blooming Grove” in the 1820s settled in the Olde Towne area. Among this group included Bloomington founding fathers Jesse Fell and James Allin. In 1831, Allin purchased 160 acres, bordered by Front, Monroe, and Roosevelt Streets. The first house in Bloomington, a double log building combining home and store, was built near 100 West Front Street by Dr. Isaac Baker. The James Mason addition, bounded by Allin, Washington, Oak, and Jefferson Streets, was added to the City in 1833, and three years later, the Allin-Gridley-Prickett Addition was platted, covering the area between Monroe, Empire, Roosevelt and Mason Streets.

Many railroad workers lived in the so-called Western Addition, which covered Howard

COMMUNITY PROFILE

and Morris to the west, Market to the north, Mason to the east and Monroe to the south. Railroad construction also provided business opportunities for area farmers and merchants, who supplied food to the rail crews. Some of the larger houses in the area served as railroad-worker boarding houses and hotels. A German neighborhood ran along Mason Street, and later in the 19th century the “Forty Acres” Irish neighborhood occupied the area west of the Alton shops. Working class families of German, Irish, Hungarian, English, Swedish and African American descent settled the Westside. When coal was discovered on the Westside, coal mines soon followed and became a major source of employment. The slag pile from mining, located between Washington and Jefferson streets, was named the “West Side Mountain” by area residents.

Prominent labor leaders emerged from the Westside in the early decades of the 20th century, including Patrick H. Morrissey and Daniel W. Tracy. Morrissey grew up near the railroad yards and eventually became Grand Master of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. Tracy, the son of a west-side Irish rail worker, gained recognition as the president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and later became assistant Secretary of Labor under Frances Perkins.

OUR AREA TODAY

The first Community Summit ended that night leaving us with a feeling of excitement, pride and hope for the future. We truly do live in a special place. We are walking distance to downtown Bloomington. The Market Street corridor connects us to the far west side and the interstate highway. We enjoy convenient and accessible public transportation on several fixed bus routes. We have two parks, a portion of the Constitution Trail, playgrounds, and many churches and organizations serving the neighborhood.

We also have three elementary schools in our area: Bent, Irving and St. Mary’s. Our schools are successful - most of our students meet or exceed state school standards. In addition, Bent and Irving (as well as nearby Sheridan) were named in 2007 by the Illinois State Board of Education as Spotlight Schools, in recognition of their high academic performance despite the high poverty rate among the student body.

Our community also boasts a diverse population of nearly 2,300 people. According to 2000 U.S. Census, about 24 percent of us are African American while another 8.6 percent



Older single family homes provide good housing options for our families.

COMMUNITY PROFILE



We are blessed with many dedicated residents who care about our neighborhood.

“It’s so rewarding to see such a cross-section of local businesses, community leaders and elected officials coming together to improve the quality-of-life for all our residents.”

-Lori Manning, Community Reinvestment Officer for State Farm Bank and West Bloomington Task Force member

are Latino. About 6.3 percent of us are elderly, while approximately 8.3 percent of us are under five years of age. In terms of educational attainment, 44.6 percent of us have completed high school, and about 6.4 percent of us have finished college. Our median household income is \$26,740, and about 17.4 percent of us are challenged by poverty.

There are well over 1,000 units of housing in our community. About 32 percent of our housing stock consists of owner-occupied dwelling units while another 57.8 percent consists of rental-occupied units. The median house value in West Bloomington is about \$61,723. While a significant number of our community’s homes are in foreclosure, we look boldly into the future and see a more positive picture of stable, affordable homes serving as the bedrock of our community.

In terms of our neighborhood economy, we benefit from our proximity to downtown, and we also have some small-scale stores along Market Street and Washington Street. Other types of goods and services, such as groceries, clothing and furniture, can be found nearby. For work, likewise, while some of us work here on the Westside, others travel to jobs in other parts of greater Bloomington-Normal.

Olde Towne encompasses the area south of Market Street, while GAP is located north of Market Street. The 2007 Form-Based Zoning Code for GAP allows for and promotes the restoration of existing homes and other buildings in the neighborhood.

We are fortunate to have the commitment of an array of local organizations at work in our community, providing everything from youth programs to rental assistance to child care to health services. These agencies include:

- American Red Cross of the Heartland
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Bloomington Housing Authority
- Bloomington Public School District 87
- Boys & Girls Club
- Catholic Charities
- Chestnut Health Systems
- Child Care Resource & Referral Network

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- Collaborative Solutions Institute
- Connections Community Center
- Family Community Resource Center
- Heartland Head Start
- Jesus Coffeehouse
- McLean County Health Department
- McLean County Urban League
- Mid Central Community Action
- Occupational Development Center
- P.A.T.H.
- Peace Meal
- Prairie State Legal Services
- Project Oz
- Recycling Furniture for Families
- Salvation Army
- The Children's Foundation
- Western Avenue Community Center
- Youthbuild McLean County

SURVEY RESULTS

Nearly 200 people completed the community survey, providing valuable input about our perceptions, our values and our priorities for West Bloomington. Most respondents, 88 percent, live in and around the study area of GAP and Olde Towne, and a significant number, 39 percent, have lived in the area for two or more generations. Few, however, work in our neighborhood. Most neighborhood information is received from the newspaper (69 percent), from neighbors (60 percent), from the television (40 percent) and from the radio (38 percent). In terms of retail stores, respondents would like to see more shopping options on Market St, Washington St and Morris Ave.

The survey pointed to general satisfaction with phone/Internet/television service, with the public library, with garbage and recycling services, and with public transit service. Improvements can be made to public safety, the quality of neighborhood parks, neighborhood jobs, and the maintenance of streets and sidewalks. Respondents value preserving historical structures, planting trees and adding beauty to the area, and enjoy the ability



Various members of our community came together to share ideas at the community summits.

“The Community Summit showed me that there is pent up demand for change.”

-Marty Vanags, Executive Director, Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area and West Bloomington Task Force member

COMMUNITY PROFILE



Friendship Park provides a playground, a picnic shelter and green space.

to walk to work, schools and stores.

Over the next five years, respondents indicate that the community will need to address the issues of public safety (88%), improving property appearance (74%), street, sidewalk and alley maintenance (67%), reducing residential vacancies (53%), enhancing recreational opportunities for youth (43%), diversifying shopping options in the neighborhood (38%), preserving historical properties (38%), supporting social cohesion and a sense of community (34%), adding to the availability of good jobs in the area (31%), and improving access to adult educational programs and resources (16%).

There are a number of things that we would like to change in our community, including cleaning up streets, sidewalks, yards and vacant lots; improving the appearance of houses, stores and other buildings; improving the safety of the area, particularly in Friendship Park; re-opening Jefferson Street to traffic; installing lights along streets, alleys and sidewalks; creating structured activities for the youth; and forging a strong feeling of community and sense of place.

There are a number of things respondents treasure about the neighborhood, such as the diversity of the community, the mature trees and ample green spaces, the strong sense of community/people in the area, the affordability of the neighborhood, the churches and schools in the area, the old, historic homes, and the good access to public transit service.

“It is nice to know that something is being done and that the West side is not a forgotten side of town.”

-Survey Respondent

COMMUNITY GREENING

STRATEGY 1:

Give our community a special and unique sense of place by living sustainably and in harmony with nature.

While the Westside community may not look like an area in need of greening, especially with its beautiful, large, mature trees, there are actually few available open spaces for active and passive uses by our residents. Friendship Park sits in the heart of our community, and we have several empty lots scattered about, but we need open spaces large enough for community events, programming and recreational activities. In addition, we need improved streetscapes to improve liveability in the neighborhood.

PROJECTS:

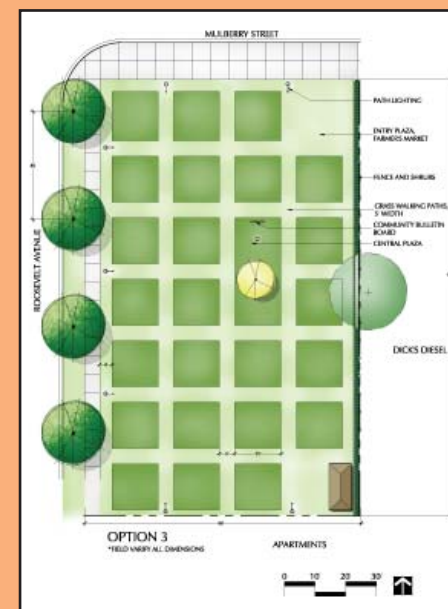
1.1 Develop and maintain a community garden in the heart of our community for vegetables, flowers and other plantings, as well as classes on recycling, composting, landscaping and urban agriculture.

Within weeks of this process beginning, this community garden idea was conceived and implemented thanks to dedicated volunteers and the provision of a parcel of land from the City of Bloomington at the southeast corner of Roosevelt Avenue and Mulberry Street. The garden will have a variety of plots to grow vegetables and flowers. People of all ages from our Westside neighborhoods are coming together to share their gardening skills. Programming at the garden will eventually include classes on recycling, composting, landscaping and urban agriculture. Street trees will be planted along Roosevelt Street. In addition, the garden could host a small mid-week farmer's market for the benefit of our community. Neighborhood gardeners are hard at work preparing the land for gardening, assembling donated materials, and began planting the first vegetables of tomatoes, eggplants and cauliflower within weeks of establishing the garden.



Above: Community members volunteer their time & effort to create the garden.

Below: A sketch of the garden, with plots and other amenities.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS



As a central axis through the Westside and as a gateway to downtown Bloomington, Market Street would benefit from streetscape improvements. In the future, the center turn lane may be converted into a landscaped median, transforming Market Street into a graceful boulevard.

1.2 Ensure that high quality, fresh food is available in the neighborhood.

Access to fresh, nutritious food is vital to public health and to overall quality-of-life. Therefore, in order to ensure that high quality, fresh food is available, we will add community gardens throughout our community, add a mid-week farmer's market at the garden, work with local farmers markets to accept food stamps via the Electronic Benefits Transfer card, recruit a full-service grocery store to the area, seek the introduction of nutrition and cooking education classes, and develop a community cookbook of nutritious and healthy food.

1.3 Plan streetscape improvements along Market St. and Washington St. that address landscaping, lighting, street furniture, parking, bus stops and crosswalks.

Create safer and more pleasant streetscape environments for all users along Market and Washington Streets. Design ample spaces for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Consider stop signs or traffic lights to better control traffic. Build bulb-outs and clearly-defined crosswalks to make crossing these busy streets easier and safer. Install decorative light fixtures for both the vehicle and the pedestrian, and include banners to identify our neighborhoods. Work with the City's Beautification Committee to create gateways with signage, landscaping and/or murals and other elements when entering the neighborhood along Market and Washington Streets to help forge a sense of place among ourselves as well as visitors. Add street trees, upgrade sidewalks and crosswalks, and install benches, bike racks, trash bins, and other street furniture where appropriate.

1.4 Create a calendar of events, workshops and other programming at Friendship Park and the community garden so that there is organized activity in these public spaces.

Develop an active agenda of public events and programming in public spaces in our community. Work with our schools, churches and non-profits to organize a rotating display of public art produced from within our community for display in our community. Encourage a different church in our area to host an event in Friendship Park each evening. Organize other events in Friendship Park and the community garden, such as a chess competition or the establishment of a butterfly garden; host holiday family events there, such as an Easter Egg Hunt or a Halloween costume contest; and post a weekly or monthly calendar of events for it, the community garden, and other vital public open spaces on the Westside.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

1.5 Organize a competition for the “greenest” building in the community and take the opportunity to educate ourselves on sustainable practices that save money.

We not only want our community to be surrounded by and embedded in the greenery of nature, but we also want to be “green” in terms of leading sustainable lives and treading lightly on the Earth. From rain gardens to solar panels to native vegetation to low-flow shower heads, much can be done to make our homes, businesses and other buildings less wasteful and more sustainable. Organize a community-wide competition to see who can make the “greenest” building in our neighborhoods. Take advantage of this annual event to educate ourselves on sustainable practices and to showcase the great things happening in our Westside community!

1.6 Build new bike paths in the area along Allin, Front and Locust Streets in accordance with the City’s bike master plan.

The City of Bloomington has already studied and made plans for an expanded bike path network throughout the City, including through the G.A.P. and Olde Towne neighborhoods. Work with the City to encourage the implementation of the bike master plan, particularly along Allin, Front and Locust Streets. These new bike path connections will allow for easier access to area parks, schools, churches, community services, downtown Bloomington, and nearby neighborhoods.

1.7 Consider forming a new public open space or garden along Howard Street between Washington and Front Streets, and explore feasibility of land acquisition.

Several vacant lots are located in this area of mature trees in close proximity to Constitution Trail. Work with area residents and the City to explore the possibility of a new park in between Friendship Park and Alton Depot Park. Park design would be very important to ensure plenty of visibility, sufficient open space for active recreational pursuits, and to mitigate the presence of the railway.



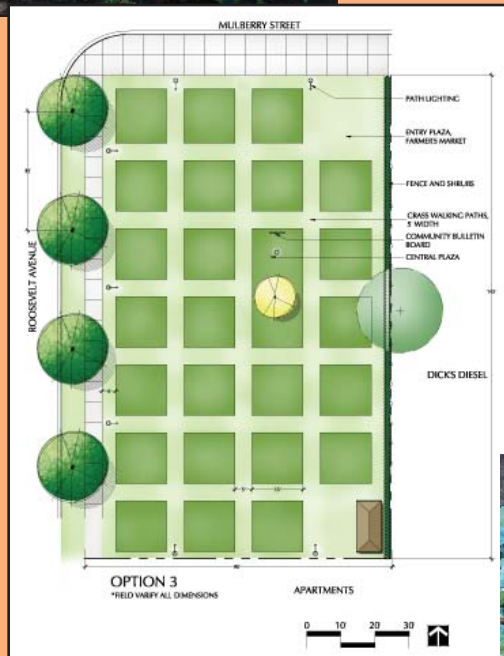
Extending the existing bike path network will provide new connections with other areas.

A new park or garden would add a new community green space in the neighborhood.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

COMMUNITY GARDEN SERVES AS SPRINGBOARD FOR COMMUNITY ACTION



The community garden, located on the south-east corner of Mulberry and Roosevelt on a City-owned lot, formed in mid-2008 and immediately local gardeners started planting vegetables, flowers and other green delights. The garden quickly became a meeting place for neighborly interaction, volunteerism, and neighborhood pride, as well as a focal point for local events, festivals and celebrations! Due to its popularity and success, the Community Greening Committee is exploring the possibility of opening another garden on the Westside. Thanks to local businesses that have donated materials and to the City for the use of the land and for the water supply!

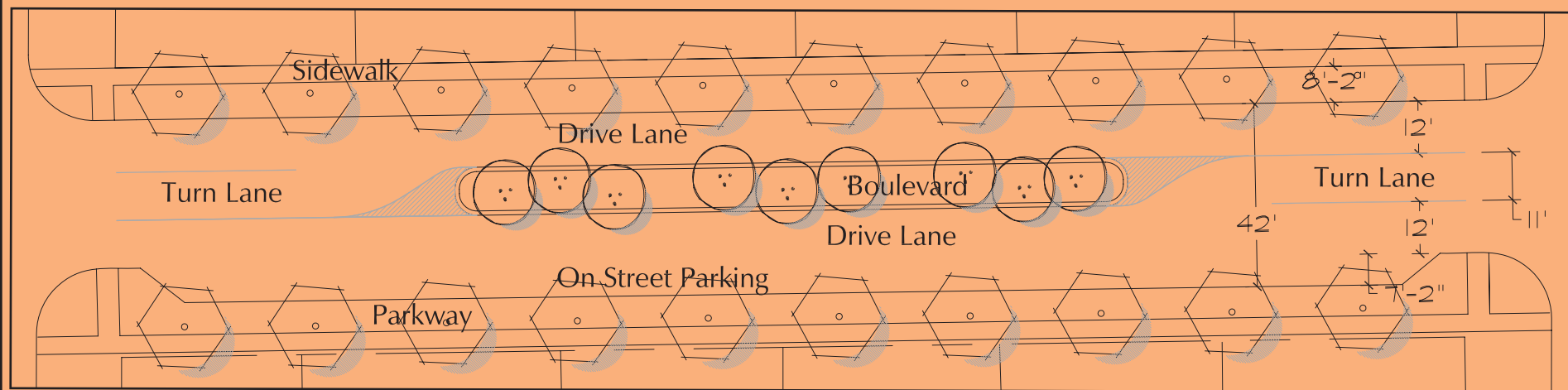


STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

MARKET STREET BOULEVARD: REESTABLISHING THE GATEWAY TO DOWNTOWN



While basic improvements are being made to Market Street in 2008, plans are in the works to transform it into a beautiful urban boulevard with a landscaped median, a parkway with trees and improved sidewalks and crosswalks to increase the safety of pedestrians. The new and improved Market Street will offer a welcoming entrance to visitors and residents of the Westside and will play an integral part in the area's revitalization.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS



Engaging youth in the development and implementation of this plan has been a cornerstone of the process and central to the revitalization of the community.

YOUTH

STRATEGY 2:

Create a nurturing and supportive community environment for all our youth.

Our youth are our most precious resource - they are the future of our community. We must work together as a Village, helping one another, to support and nurture our youth. We need to better communicate our resources, take advantage of them, and fill in the gaps. From mentoring our children and teenagers, to supporting youth public art initiative to establishing teen centers to organizing intergenerational activities, we will continue to implement great programming for our youth and make our community a place where our youth can thrive and flourish.

PROJECTS:

2.1 Make a comprehensive clearinghouse of all established community after-school programs as well as all volunteer, work and mentoring programs, and communicate all such offerings on a regular basis to members of our community.

So many youth programs currently exist in and around our Westside neighborhoods, but often we simply do not realize the wealth of resources at our fingertips. Work with Project Oz, Collaborative Solutions Institute, Western Avenue Community Center, Mid Central Community Action, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Club, Youthbuild, Bent School, Irving School and St. Mary's School to create a clearinghouse of all established and planned youth programs and communicate this information via a community website, newsletter and other means to all community residents and update the information regularly.

2.2 Partner with local schools to create a program to display youth art in public places.

Work with Bent, Irving and St. Mary's schools to share our children's art with the rest of the community. Possible places for public display include the community garden, Friendship Park, in front of schools and churches, outside the Coliseum, and along the newly designed Market and Washington Streets public rights-of-way. Indoor spaces too should be utilized to showcase our children's art, such as the future community center at Mt. Pisgah.

2.3 Establish a bike-share program.

With the Constitution Trail running right through our community, and with the future expansion of the City's bike path network through the Westside, our area will soon be a much better place to get around on bike. Work with the City to establish a bike-share program, which allows those of us without a bike to use one on a flexible and convenient basis. The program could even consist of donated/rehabilitated bikes and could be an opportunity for youth to help manage an important community enterprise. Build bike pick-up and drop-off kiosks and plenty of bike racks at strategic locations throughout our area.

2.4 Coordinate with ISU and IWU a college visit day/weekend for our youth, as well as mentoring from current college students.

Work together with both local universities to offer the chance for our youth to get an insider's look into higher education and to help them start thinking about options after high school. Strengthen existing mentoring programs with ISU and IWU to encourage our youth to study hard, apply themselves, and to prepare themselves for the future.

2.5 Partner with 4-H and Urban League to offer classes in math and science.

Mathematics and the natural sciences are important academic subjects, are key to many jobs of today and tomorrow, and often pose difficulties for kids. Work with 4-H and Urban League to supplement the math and science education in our schools; for example, by offering special tutoring, after-school/weekend study sessions and even summer classes.



Bent School, an elementary school on the Westside, is home to a variety of activities such as English as a Second Language classes, Boy Scouts and athletic programming for youth.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

COMPUTER DONATION/REHABILITATION PROGRAM FOR WESTSIDE YOUTH



One of the exciting youth projects that is already underway is a community computer donation and rehabilitation program for Westside youth. Many donations of computer equipment have been pouring into the offices of Blue Jay Computers, which has been taking the lead on this project. A partnering organization would help implement a computer training component so as to make the best use of this technology for the maximum benefit of Westside residents. This project will help achieve our goal of making our community a place where youth can thrive and flourish!





The future community center at Mt. Pisgah will fill a crucial role in our community by offering space for many youth-oriented programs and activities.

2.6 Create a program for youth to visit with seniors in our community.

Intergenerational contact is crucial to a healthy and stable society. Our youth can learn so much from seniors, they can volunteer their time to lend a helping hand to the elderly, and our youth can bring such joy to our seniors. Enabling such contact represents a win-win situation for our youth, our seniors, and the whole community.

2.7 Partner with Mt. Pisgah to build and support a community center open during the day and evening with free/low-cost activities, camps, field trips, classes, a computer/tech room, and which includes space for our teenagers to socialize and engage in recreational activities with adult supervision.

Partner with Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church to realize the creation of a comprehensive community center in the heart of our Westside area. This center will be open to kids, teenagers, young adults, parents, grandparents, seniors and others; on weekdays, weekends, mornings, afternoons and evenings; for classes, socializing, recreation and education. It will be a true resource for the entire community.

2.8 Establish a program to donate rehabilitated computers to our youth.

Partner with Westside business Blue Jay Computers and local non-profit or School District 87 to create a computer donation and rehabilitation program for area youth. The program would need a computer training component to make the most effective use of the computers and to have the greatest possible impact on the technological knowledge of our youth.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

SAFETY & WELL-BEING

STRATEGY 3:

Transform the Westside into a safe, harmonious and healthy community.

Safety and well-being are fundamental to our community's quality-of-life. Without a sense of security, it will be nearly impossible for true community-building to take place. We need to work with and support Bloomington's dedicated police force. We need to strengthen our social ties and the organization of our communities. And we need to work hard to achieve the other elements of our community plan: improving the lives of our youth, our educational infrastructure, our natural environment, our economic development, and our homes. Only through a serious investment in these other dimensions can we radically transform the underlying conditions that contribute to crime, violence and social disharmony in our community. We will take responsibility for our community. We will take active steps to make the Westside a safer place to live, work and play.

PROJECTS:

3.1 Form a new neighborhood watch in the vicinity of Morris Ave and Taylor St., and promote coordination and communication among the watches.

Most parts of our community have existing neighborhood watches; however, some areas, like around Taylor and Jackson Streets, or around Grove and Front, do not. Work with the City to create an inventory of all blocks without neighborhood watches. Create a campaign to initiate neighborhood watches where they are needed. Work with residents as well as with the police to help establish functional neighborhood watches where needed so as to cover the entire community under this very useful program.

3.2 Provide training at neighborhood watch / association meetings to help us to identify and to assist our at-risk older friends and neighbors.

It is very important to keep an eye out for our aging friends and neighbors in the community. Make use of neighborhood watch groups and neighborhood association meetings to raise awareness of seniors living in our midst and to educate ourselves on monitoring and intervention steps to take to safeguard the lives of our older community members.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS



3.3 Work with the United States Postal Service to establish and to advertise a Carrier Alert Program to monitor the well-being of our elderly and disabled neighbors.

The U.S. Postal Service already maintains a program to monitor elderly residents in many communities. We need to work with U.S.P.S. to establish such a program in G.A.P. and Olde Towne. Another set of eyes, in addition to ours and those of the police, help keep tabs on our aging friends and neighbors can help prevent tragedy and to allow our seniors to continue living and contributing to the life of our community.

3.4 Make a lighting inventory and make note of any missing/broken street lamps, and install light fixtures along all alleys, streets, sidewalks and bike paths that need them.

Too many of our streets, alleys, sidewalks and bike paths are dark at night and do not have adequate illumination. Work with the City to complete a comprehensive lighting inventory and note any missing and/or broken street, alley, sidewalk and bike path lights. Continue to make official notification when lights go out in the future. Lighting alleys will require specific action on the part of the City Council to change current practice.



3.5 Trim trees in both the public right-of-way and on private property to ensure that branches are not blocking street lamps.

Work with the City to trim trees that block too much light from street lamps, as well as those with dead limbs or that create a safety hazard in any way. In addition, encourage property owners to maintain their trees and to likewise trim limbs and branches when necessary for public safety.



3.6 Install new rail crossing safety gates at at-grade rail crossings in our area.

A single at-grade railway passes through the heart of our area, crossing streets six times between Morris Avenue and Lee Street, while passing very close to the Constitution Trail. This poses a safety risk to those of us who must cross these tracks in our day-to-day lives. Work with the City and the owner of the railway to install rail crossing safety gates where the railway crosses Front, Allin, Grove, Low, Olive, Mason and Lee Streets. Also install pedestrian rail crossing gates where sidewalks are crossed by the railway.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

3.7 Consider reopening Jefferson St. to through-traffic and traffic calming measures on Allin St. near Friendship Park.

Currently, Jefferson St. is closed off to through-traffic just east of Allin St., creating some minor traffic circulation issues and reducing normal daily activity in this area. Nearby residents can assemble a petition to ask the City to reopen Jefferson St. if there is consensus on this issue. In addition, traffic tends to speed along Allin Street where in the vicinity of Friendship Park, creating an unsafe environment for children playing nearby. Work with the City and the Traffic Review Board to consider traffic calming measures along this part of Allin Street. Other considerations would be to allow street parking, which tends to reduce traffic speed, and to install bulb-outs to make safer pedestrian crossings.

3.8 Continue to train police, neighborhood watches to detect/deter elder abuse.

Abuse and neglect of seniors is unfortunately prevalent in many communities. In order to make our Westside community safe for our seniors, we need to continue to work with the City, law enforcement, and neighborhood watches to detect and report elder abuse.

3.9 Start “Turn the Porch Light On” campaign to help deter crime.

Adequate nighttime illumination is not only necessary along public streets, but also on private property around homes and businesses. Initiate a “turn the porch light on” educational campaign to our residents and business owners to raise awareness about the importance of exterior illumination in the prevention of both property and personal crime. Seek the donation of environmentally-friendly light bulbs for residents to use on their front porches.

3.10 Utilize design to facilitate surveillance and to reduce crime.

Design physical features in such a way so as to maximize visibility and to promote community interaction. Establish clear boundaries between public and private space. Use landscaping to reinforce areas of private ownership, making violators of that space easily identifiable. See the next page for examples of safe and unsafe community design.





Clear, easy-to-read street numbers on buildings or doors are a necessity for police to locate an address quickly in an emergency, and is also required per City Code.

3.11 Work with the City to distribute pamphlets explaining the importance of making all building numbers large, illuminated and easily visible from the street, as required per City Code.

Initiate a community educational campaign about the importance (and requirement per City Code) of easily visible building numbers seen from the street. This is especially important for emergency personnel when trying to find a particular address as quickly as possible in response to an emergency. Distribute City pamphlets discussing this issue in detail, and write reminders in our community's newsletters.

3.12 Encourage community watch groups to actively report code violations to the City.

Many vacant lots tend to accumulate garbage and other debris, as well as attract criminal activity. Of course this also sometimes happens on occupied lots as well. Encourage community watch groups to report these and other instances of code violations to the City and the Police on a regular basis.

3.13 Address safety issues arising after home foreclosures have already occurred.

The effects of home foreclosures can be devastating, and in particular safety issues arise due to lack of maintenance and the threat of criminal activity. These issues need to be addressed directly in the wake of home foreclosures so as to prevent the spread of negative effects to the rest of the neighborhood.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

PRINCIPLES OF CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN



Top: Boarded up houses create places to hide and invite criminal activity.
Bottom: Vacant lots reduce the natural surveillance of the area.



Top: Blank walls create large blind area on sides of houses.
Bottom: Plentiful windows add eyes to the street.



Natural Surveillance:
Top: Thick vegetation around park decreases natural surveillance.
Bottom: High ground, recreational path and carefully placed trees creates good visibility.



Top: Blank wall creates blind spots with little visibility onto sidewalk.
Bottom: Wall of windows allows for monitoring of car park.

Natural Access Control:

Top: Front porch clearly marks private space and creates a welcoming environment.

Bottom: Absence of control elements inhibit use of space for positive social interaction.



Maintenance:

Top: A poorly maintained sidewalk sends the message that no one cares about this street, and therefore there might be more opportunity for criminal activity.

Bottom: A well maintained street, sidewalk and curb sends the message that this street is looked after and cared for, and therefore there is more of a likelihood of getting caught in the act of a criminal deed.

Territorial Reinforcement:

Top: A low, well-maintained fence clearly sends a signal of ownership over a defined space and would alert neighbors to the presence of a stranger in the wrong area.

Bottom: The lack of a defined boundary on this property makes trespassing hard to distinguish.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY 4:

Grow existing businesses, attract new shops and expand workforce development training throughout our Westside community.

Access to good jobs, convenient and affordable shopping opportunities, and a skilled workforce are the three legs of the Westside's economic development stool. First, we will work to attract private sector investment to our community so as to add to the number of local job opportunities, and we will also work to better connect our residents to employment centers located beyond the Westside. Next, we will work to attract new retailers so as to benefit from a more diverse range of shopping options, such as lower prices resulting from more business competition for goods and services. Finally, we will work to expand job training programs and skills-based courses as part of a workforce development program for our community.

PROJECTS:

4.1 Retain existing employers in this area, encourage them to expand their operations, and recruit new employers to the Westside.

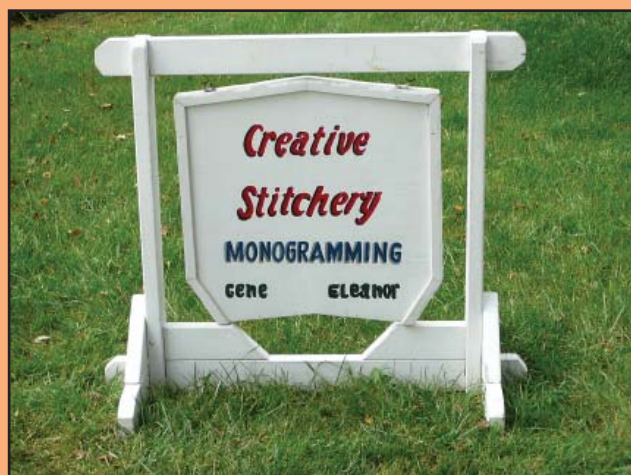
In order to provide more head of household jobs in our community, we will partner with the City and the EDC to market the Westside's central location adjacent to downtown Bloomington and its excellent transportation access, make it more attractive for private companies, public agencies and non-profit organizations to establish new or to expand existing operations on the Westside, and explore other options for attracting jobs. Focus on existing employment areas, particularly downtown and the Market Street corridor, as prime areas for new head of household jobs.

4.2 Together with the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System, explore the feasibility of creating an "Early Hours" public transit program.

Most weekday bus routes in Bloomington begin service between 6am and 7am. Some people, however, need transit service starting at an earlier hour. Just as the Bloomington-



The Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System is a crucial link between Westside residents and jobs.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

Normal Public Transit System provides an “After Hours” program for late night service between 9:30pm and 1am, we will work with BNPTS to explore the possibility of establishing an “Early Hours” program for early morning service.

4.3 Together with the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System, explore the feasibility of adding Sunday transit service.

In order to improve the accessibility to shopping and employment nodes, we will work with the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System to explore the possibility of adding Sunday service, either through select fixed routes (such as the Brown and Green lines) or based on the “After Hours” program.

4.4 Partner with the EDC, ISU and IWU to encourage new business start-ups and local cooperative enterprises.

Area institutions possess the knowledge, resources and capacity for assisting with the establishment of business start-ups and employment cooperatives. We will partner with the EDC to connect would-be entrepreneurs with its microloan program, access to New Markets Tax Credits, and community development corporation which will provide financial services to local small businesses, and we will likewise link them with ISU’s Illinois Small Business Development Center. These efforts will foster other avenues for job creation, fulfill unique economic needs, support our entrepreneurs, and nurture a mutually supportive environment for innovation and economic independence.

4.5 Market and rebrand the Westside/Market Street/Downtown area and seek destination stores and restaurants in this key central area of Bloomington.

We will work with the EDC, the Downtown Bloomington Association and the City to market/rebrand the Westside to attract retailers, destination stores, restaurants and shoppers to our community, particularly on the near west side of downtown Bloomington between Lee and Madison Streets and along Market Street in order to capitalize off of these prime activity node attributes and favorable zoning. Doing so will contribute to a healthy, competitive business environment, which will help to lower prices for goods and services in our neighborhood. Potential retail market opportunities for the Westside/Market Street/Downtown area include:



Transit bus routes connect the Westside to jobs, education and other services throughout Bloomington-Normal. The Westside’s strategic location can also bring workers from other neighborhoods to new jobs in the Westside.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS



Wilson's Cycle Shop on West Market Street is a long-standing business that attracts people from all over Bloomington-Normal. Another neighborhood business cluster is located at Morris Ave and Washington St.



Retail Stores	Opportunity Gap	Percent of Expenditures Occurring Outside Trade Area
Convenience Stores	\$1.2 million	86% (1-mile Trade Area)
Garden Centers	\$1.7 million	100% (1-mile Trade Area)
Full-Service Restaurants	\$3.4 million	32% (1-mile Trade Area)
Supermarkets	\$15.2 million	66% (1-mile Trade Area)
Furniture Stores	\$14.1 million	87% (3-mile Trade Area)
Automotive Stores	\$9.1 million	47% (3-mile Trade Area)
Hardware Stores	\$4.1 million	43% (3-mile Trade Area)
Prerecorded Music Stores	\$3.2 million	100% (3-mile Trade Area)
Household Appliance Stores	\$2.1 million	43% (3-mile Trade Area)

Data from Claritas, 2008

4.6 Enhance workforce development programming and training for our residents.

Workforce development is an integral component to our economic development strategy. We will explore the feasibility of establishing a permanent office in our neighborhood to be the center for career counseling services, classes on financial literacy, information on starting a business, neighborhood marketing information, information on apprenticeship programs, resume workshops, job fairs and free or low-cost skills-based courses (i.e. on information technology, public speaking, technical writing, etc.). We will also work with Heartland, local unions and the United Workforce Development Board/Career Link to link up our students with its apprenticeship programs. Partner with the City, the EDC, IWU, ISU, State Farm, and other organizations to establish and to sustain our neighborhood business office operations.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

COMMERCIAL SITE REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY - MARKET & HOWARD STREET

The redevelopment of the key commercial site on the corner of Market and Howard Streets would potentially:

- Provide new shopping opportunities for Westside residents
- Provide new jobs for Westside residents
- Contribute to the economic development of the Westside
- Contribute to the revitalization efforts of W. Market Street
- Be a source of pride for the Westside

Below and to the right, images of what this area could look like in the future.



HOUSING

STRATEGY 5:

Provide a broad range of housing types to provide safe, decent and affordable shelter for people of all ages and incomes, particularly society's most vulnerable.

Safe, decent and affordable housing is vital to safeguarding our neighborhood's quality-of-life. Our housing strategy includes making dwellings more accessible to seniors and persons with disabilities, reinvigorating our public housing communities, stabilizing the housing stock on a block-by-block basis, and creating new housing options to meet the diverse demands of our community. Improved neighborhood conditions can bring back the full value of our community's homes, thereby promoting wealth accumulation. We do not aim for gentrification and the displacement of current residents. Rather, we strive to create safe, decent and affordable homes for everyone in our community.

PROJECTS:

5.1 Develop housing for a wide range of incomes and households.

We will work with our local non-profits including Mid Central Community Action and Habitat for Humanity to take advantage of vacant parcels in the neighborhood. Detached houses, duplexes, townhouses and small apartment buildings should continue to be supported as infill housing opportunities. A healthy neighborhood will need both homeownership and quality rental opportunities. An on-going Housing Committee has been formed to coordinate these activities and to ensure a well-rounded housing program will help meet the needs of all residents in the community. New housing should be constructed to fit the character of the neighborhood and surrounding housing stock.

5.2 Build and rehab accessible residential dwellings for seniors and persons with disabilities.

As our neighborhood population ages, accessibility features of our homes will become increasingly important. We want our older friends and neighbors to be able to age-in-place, thereby remaining physically in our community where they belong. The same holds true for our fellow community members with physical disabilities. Therefore, we encourage all new residential



The Westside is home to a variety of distinctive housing types, providing a foundation for community pride.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS



This newly renovated home on the Westside demonstrates the potential for residential revitalization. Below, a well-cared for home is a boost to the neighborhood.



units constructed in our community to follow the principles of universal design and visitability, and, where practical, to modify existing residential units to be accessible to those with physical impairments as well. To that end, we will work with the City to leverage funds for neighborhood housing repairs, with the Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging to identify and connect with seniors through their case workers, with the LIFE Center for Independent Living and marcfirst to connect with members of the disabled community and their families, and we will partner with the City and private developers to develop a senior residential community with convenient access to neighborhood amenities and services.

5.3 Work with major employers to provide Employer Assisted Housing.

Develop an Employer Assisted Housing (EAH) program with major employers to provide housing counseling and benefits to retain employees and to provide greater housing stability in the neighborhood. EAH programs typically combine an employer match for down-payment with a state down-payment program and assistance for housing counseling. Through EAH, renters on the Westside will have the assistance they need to purchase homes, thus increasing the homeownership rate in the neighborhood while providing greater employee retention to participating companies and organizations.

5.4 Revitalize vacant homes and return them to full occupancy.

Vacant homes are common on many blocks, creating safety and aesthetic concerns as unmaintained buildings deteriorate and become safe havens for criminals. In order to reverse this trend in increasing home vacancies, we will work with the City, property owners and housing development groups to revitalize vacant homes and to rehabilitate existing homes whenever feasible. We will seek out low-cost loans for rehabilitation and rebuild our neighborhood one house at a time. Finally, we will encourage banks to donate foreclosed, vacant properties to YouthBuild, Habitat for Humanity, the Bloomington Housing Authority and other non-profit housing developers.

5.5 Work with owners of historic homes to connect them with funding sources, such as federal tax credits and county tax freezes, to help preserve and restore these houses.

Our Westside neighborhood is blessed with many historical homes that connect us with our collective past and bring beauty and enjoyment to our community. Rehabilitation is expensive,

however, so in order to protect our neighborhood's historic homes, we will seek out low-cost loans to restore and/or to preserve these jewels so we can continue to enjoy these neighborhood assets in the future.

5.6 Establish affordable live/work studios.

Our neighborhood creative arts professionals often have unique housing needs because they need both a place to live and sleep as well as a place to work, all under the same roof. The relative affordability of our houses and the availability of vacant or underutilized buildings mean that the conditions are ripe for conversion of these spaces to live/work studios where creative industries can work on their crafts from the comfort and convenience of their own homes. We will work with the City to permit these types of live/work studios in our community, and we will seek out funding and marketing to achieve this project. In addition, by supporting our local artists we will be fostering a unique, home-grown culture that will enrich our lives and foster a greater sense of community.

5.7 Educate landlords and tenants on their respective rights and responsibilities.

Both landlords and tenants have rights and responsibilities, and by working together, can make for a healthy and functional residential rental market. In order to foster trust, knowledge and respect, we will work with the City, Prairie Legal Services, the Bloomington Housing Authority, other private housing providers, and with landlord associations to continue taking active steps to bring both sides together, particularly by offering periodic classes to interested landlords and tenants and distributing informational brochures with the signing of new residential leases.

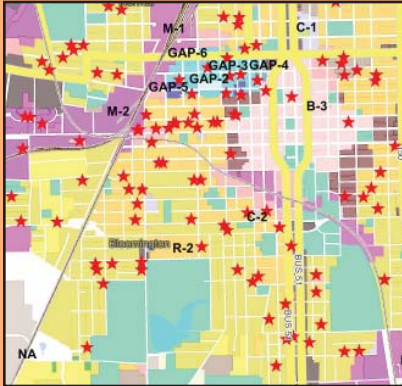
5.8 Connect residents to grants for financing green housing retrofits and weatherization projects.

Sustainability is a goal that everyone needs to work toward, and making our homes more sustainable is one of the biggest actions we can all take to reduce our carbon footprint. While there are many small and relatively inexpensive adjustments we can make to our homes, such as installing low-flow shower heads and using energy efficient light bulbs, other retrofits are bigger and costlier. Therefore, we will seek out funding to assist members of our community to make our homes as energy efficient and sustainable as possible.



Buildings such as these could be converted to live/work studios for home-based businesses, artists, and other trades.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS



Map of foreclosures on the Westside.

5.9 Support mixed-use buildings with first floor retail and residential units above in select business clusters in our community.

Some areas are well-suited for mixed commercial and residential buildings in business activity nodes, such as at the corner of Washington Street and Morris Avenue, along commercial corridors, like Market Street, and in the transition area between downtown and the Westside. This type of building would create space for small-scale ground floor retail or office uses with housing units above.

5.10 Assist homeowners in our neighborhood at risk for or facing foreclosure.

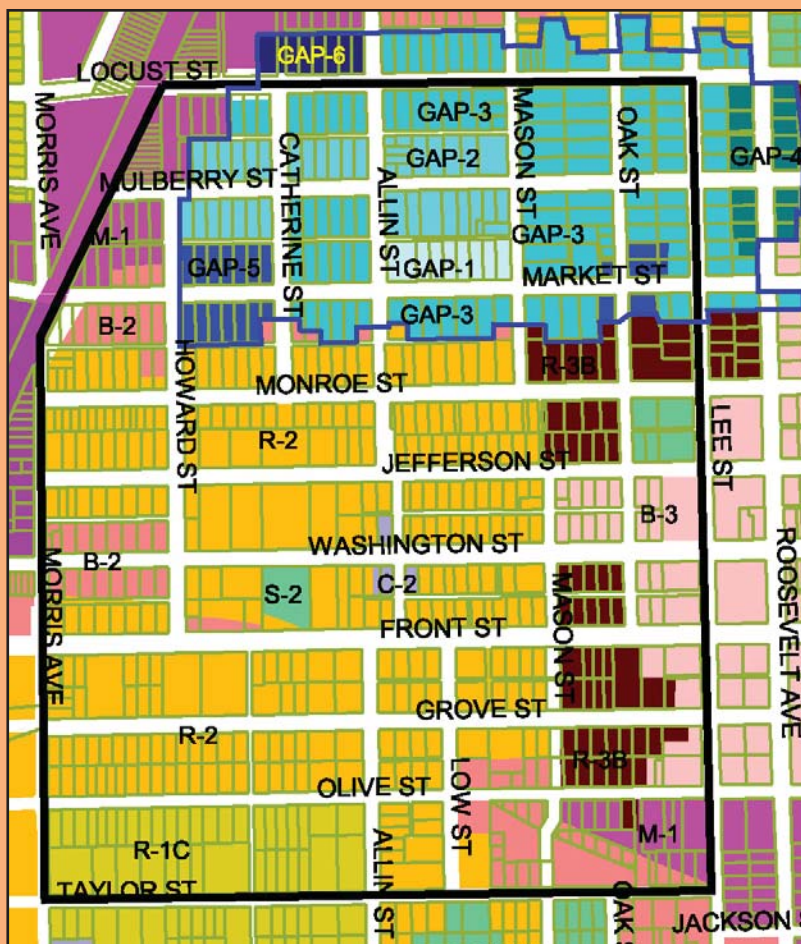
Homeowners at risk for or facing foreclosure face the prospect of losing their homes, and the rest of the community is threatened with the prospect of more vacant, boarded-up houses and declining property values. With the highest concentration of foreclosures in Bloomington, we will work with the City, Mid Central Community Action and the EDC to put in place a Homeowner Preservation Initiative to provide outreach, counseling and direct assistance to those in default on their mortgage payments. This investment to prevent foreclosures, through loss mitigation, preservation loans, refinancing and other strategies, will save our community from the much higher costs of managing the effects of a neighborhood torn apart from widespread foreclosures.

5.11 Work with the City to continue to enforce the building code.

The health, safety and general welfare of our community is impacted greatly by members of our community that fail to abide by the rules and regulation of our City's building code. We will maintain vigilance of buildings and properties, talk to owners of unkempt yards and unmaintained structures, and report violations to the City. We will work with the City, neighborhood associations and block captains to continue disseminating educational pamphlets about owners' rights, responsibilities and consequences of failing to adhere to safety and aesthetic standards. Through this effort we will keep our housing stock in good shape, avoid dilapidation, and maintain clean yards. If necessary, we will suggest changes to be made to the building code.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

UPDATE ZONING CODE IN OLDE TOWNE TO HELP IMPLEMENT PLAN'S GOALS



Potential zoning objectives for Olde Towne should:

- Allow for a variety of uses to promote/foster neighborhood vitality/walkability
- Allow for a mix of housing types and residential densities to allow households with different needs to live close together
- Stimulate development of vacant/underused sites
- Develop contextual design standards
- Include regulations detailing street/ROW standards

The existing zoning districts in Olde Towne provide a mix of medium to high-density residential uses, downtown uses, and neighborhood shopping and general business uses. Some blocks in the R-2 district should be preserved for single dwelling units while other areas should be permitted to have 3-4 storey townhome-like infill development that is professionally managed and maintained.

There are also historic structures scattered throughout Olde Towne that, while probably not necessitating a historic district, should be individually protected.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS ON OR NEAR THE WESTSIDE

Non-profit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and Mid Central Community Action are active on the affordable housing front on the Westside. Some of the future projects these groups are working on will be occurring on Washington, Grove, Olive and Mulberry Streets in order to build new housing units in the area. These types of projects help make the dream of home ownership a reality for more people, rejuvenate neighborhoods with new investment, and help build stronger communities.



5.12 Assist would-be homeowners through education and counseling programs.

A general framework of knowledge is needed in order to become a successful homeowner; however, a knowledge gap prevents some members of our community from making the transition from renter to homeowner. Thus, we will work with the City, Mid Central Community Action, Chestnut Health Systems and the EDC to establish counseling, educational programming and financial literacy classes to address this need and to expand access to the dream of homeownership to more members of our community.



5.13 Continue to support local initiatives to meet the housing needs of the challenged population.

The challenged population, including groups of people that are unemployed, recently paroled and mentally challenged, has unique housing needs. We need to continue supporting local efforts to adequately shelter these members of our community and to integrate them into community life as best we can. For those that are able, we will encourage their advancement from transitional housing to public housing to the private housing market.



5.14 Investigate adopting a vacant building ordinance to fight blight.

Vacant buildings are often neglected, become eyesores, depress nearby property values and foster criminal behavior. In order to stop the spread of blight brought about by vacant homes and other buildings, the City should investigate adopting a vacant building ordinance that could provide incentives for owners to properly maintain vacant structures and to make plans for fixing, demolishing and/or selling these structures and returning them to full use within the community.

5.15 Explore the use of CDBG funds to provide a matching pool for owners of apartment buildings to make necessary renovations.

Apartment buildings, like owner-occupied housing in the area, are in need of repairs and rehabilitation. In order to facilitate improvements, explore the possibility of using CDBG funds to assist the owners of apartment buildings to help revitalize this component of the neighborhood's housing stock.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS



EDUCATION

STRATEGY 6:

Create a Westside community where everyone is able to achieve his or her full potential.

Educational programming, facilities and access is of central importance and relevance to nearly all members of our community, from children to teenagers to adults to seniors. Education is a key component to enhancing our quality-of-life both now and in the future. It is a serious community investment. There have been a number of innovative programs undertaken by District 87, the City of Bloomington and non-profit partners that provide additional opportunities for our youth and for continuing education. We must push for academic rigor and educational excellence in our schools, support the efforts of District 87's Achievement Gap Task Force, and make the best use of our educational resources to achieve comprehensive human development.

PROJECTS:

6.1 Develop life skills educational programs for adult members of our community.

Life skills courses will be aimed at increasing participants' skills in decision-making, critical thinking, financial literacy, conflict resolution, parental training, computer/internet/technology, and other employable skills. For example, English as a Second Language courses are taught for adults at Bent School, along with child care during the courses. We will work to establish additional free or low-cost classes at facilities located in our community, and when possible, by teachers from our community.

6.2 Provide counsel to our junior high and high school students on post-high school educational planning.

Planning one's education is an important matter. It takes a lot of time and guidance is needed for our young people along the way. In order to facilitate this critical endeavor, we will strengthen our partnerships with local schools and universities to expand tutoring programs to include mentoring and post high-school educational planning for our youth.

6.3 Continue to utilize our neighborhood school facilities for community use after school and on weekends.

Our community's largest educational facilities, our local schools, are assets that are utilized during the evenings, weekends and during school breaks. These existing facilities can serve as much-needed educational space for other members of our community, such as the partnership between District 87 and the YWCA and the after-school activities at Bloomington Junior High School and Bloomington High School. We will work with District 87 Bloomington Public Schools, Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local private schools, to coordinate the use of classroom, playground, theatre and gymnasium space for general community use such as for cultural programming, the arts, mentoring, counseling, sporting events, computer education, and other educational activities.



6.4 Bring library services to the heart of our Westside community.

Libraries serve important community roles by advancing educational opportunities, providing community outreach, serving youth, teenagers, adults and seniors, and by promoting local economic development. We will work with the Bloomington Public Library to explore options for expanding library services to the Westside, such as opening a small neighborhood branch in the heart of our community or expanding a bookmobile service in our area. This project would create an educational focal point in the midst of our community and could serve as a location for outreach, small classes, reading groups, storytelling, and other activities, without the need to leave our neighborhood.



6.5 Initiate educational courses and programs geared toward seniors.

Our senior friends and neighbors are still advancing their knowledge and expanding their minds just like everyone else! Therefore, we need to support and encourage educational, exercise and active living programs tailored to older adults' preferences. We will work with local schools to provide facilities and seek out members of our community to volunteer or provide low-cost educational activities and programs for our seniors. In addition, we will encourage youth-senior partnerships to foster intergenerational learning programs.



STRATEGIES & PROJECTS



Children's Discovery Museum, Normal

6.6 Enhance access to educational opportunities beyond our neighborhood by providing low-cost transportation to facilities located throughout Bloomington-Normal.

The greater Bloomington-Normal area is rich with many educational resources, institutions and facilities. While it may not be realistic to have all of these elements right in our own neighborhood, it is realistic to have ready access to them. Therefore, we will work to dramatically enhance our access to our larger community's educational resources by working with the City, Bloomington Normal Public Transit System, ISU, IWU and others to coordinate free or low-cost transportation to them.

STRATEGIES & PROJECTS

DISTRICT 87 ACTIVITIES ON THE WESTSIDE



Community Programming at Bent, Irving and Sheridan Schools:

- Cubs Scouts / Brownies / Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts
- English as a Second Language
- Parks & Recreation Sports
- GED Adult Literacy
- Community Blood Drive
- Neighborhood Watch Meetings

Results from the Achievement Gap Task Force After School Program Survey:

- The majority of students reported going home directly after school.
- Sports activities are by far the most popular after-school activities.
- Students identified transportation issues as the number one factor that discourages their participation.
- Students also identified a lack of selection of "fun" programs and lack of peer participation as hindrances.
- Students' interests include sports, music, art, computers and homework/tutoring.



IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:

Organizations large and small in the Bloomington-Normal area and in the Westside neighborhood have stepped up to the plate so as to play a key role in implementing this important quality-of-life planning effort. This is only a partial, and evolving, list.

AFNI - **AFNI**

Bloomington Housing Authority - **BHA**

Bloomington-Normal Public Transit - **BNPT**

Bloomington Public Library - **BPL**

Blue Jay Computers - **BJC**

City of Bloomington (includes all relevant departments) - **CITY**

Country Financial - **CF**

District 87 Public Schools - **D87**

Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area - **EDC**

G.A.P. Neighborhood Association - **GAPNA**

Habitat for Humanity of McLean County - **HHMC**

Heartland Community College - **HCC**

Illinois Prairie Community Foundation - **IPCF**

Illinois State University - **ISU**

Illinois Wesleyan University - **IWU**

McLean County Museum of History - **MCMH**

McLean County Regional Planning - **MCRP**

McLean County Urban League - **MCUL**

Mid Central Community Action - **MCCA**

Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church - **MPBC**

NAACP of Bloomington/Normal - **NAACP**

National City Bank - **NCB**

Olde Towne Neighborhood Association - **OTNA**

Prudential Snyder Real Estate - **PSRE**

Salvation Army - **SA**

State Farm Bank - **SFB**

West Bloomington Task Force - **WBTF**

Community Greening Committee - **WBTF-CG**

Youth Committee - **WBTF-YC**

Safety/Well-Being Committee - **WBTF-SWBC**

Economic Development Committee - **WBTF-EDC**

Housing Committee - **WBTF-HC**

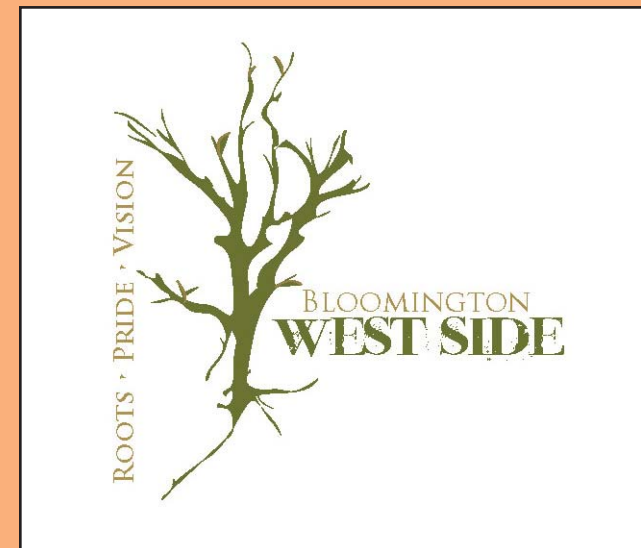
Education Committee - **WBTF-EC**

Western Avenue Community Center - **WACC**

Westside Residents - **RESIDENTS**

LOGO CONTEST

At the October 14th Community Summit, attendees voted on their preferred logo for the Westside. A total of nine logo designs were created by students at IWU. The winning design, by Marlie Jones, is of a mature tree with extensive roots and new leaves emerging, with accompanying text "Roots, Pride, Vision." Congratulations to all design participants!



IMPLEMENTATION

Strategy	Timeframe	Agent(s)
1. COMMUNITY GREENING		
1.1 Develop and maintain a community garden(s) in the heart of our community for vegetables, flowers and other plantings; classes on recycling, composting, landscaping and urban agriculture; and a mid-week farmer's market.	Short Term	WBTF-CGC GAPNA OTNA
1.2 Ensure that high quality, fresh food is available in the neighborhood.	Short Term	WBTF-CGC EDC
1.3 Plan streetscape improvements along Market St. and Washington St. that address landscaping, lighting, street furniture, parking, bus stops and crosswalks.	Short Term	CITY WBTF-CGC
1.4 Create a calendar of events, workshops and other programming at Friendship Park and the community garden so that there is organized activity in these public spaces. Explore feasibility of a butterfly garden at Friendship Park.	Short Term	WBTF-CGC GAPNA OTNA
1.5 Organize a competition for the "greenest" building in the community and take the opportunity to educate ourselves on sustainable practices that save money.	Medium Term	WBTF-CGC GAPNA OTNA
1.6 Build new bike paths in the area along Allin, Front and Locust Streets in accordance with the City's bike master plan.	Long Term	WBTF-CGC CITY
1.7 Consider forming a new public open space or community garden along Howard Street between Washington and Front Streets. Explore feasibility of land acquisition.	Long Term	WBTF-CGC CITY OTNA
2. YOUTH		
2.1 Make a comprehensive clearinghouse of all established community after-school programs as well as all volunteer, work and mentoring programs, and communicate all such offerings on a regular basis to members of our community.	Short Term	WBTF-YC D87 IWU MPBC
2.2 Partner with local schools to create a program to display youth art in public places.	Short Term	WBTF-YC D87 GAPNA OTNA CITY
2.3 Establish a bike-share program.	Medium Term	WBTF-YC CITY

IMPLEMENTATION

2.4 Coordinate with ISU and IWU a college visit day/weekend for our youth, as well as mentoring from current college students.	Short Term	WBTF-YC ISU IWU MPBC
2.5 Partner with Urban League and other groups such as 4-H to offer classes in math and science.	Medium Term	WBTF-YC MCUL D87
2.6 Create a program for youth to visit with seniors in our community.	Medium Term	WBTF-YC MPBC IWU
2.7 Partner with Mt. Pisgah to build and support a community center open during the day and evening with free/low-cost activities, camps, field trips, classes, a computer/tech room, and which includes space for our teenagers to socialize and engage in recreational activities with adult supervision.	<u>Facility</u> : Long Term <u>Programs</u> : Short Term	WBTF-YC MPBC
2.8 Establish a program to donate rehabilitated computers to our youth.	Short Term	WBTF-YC BJC
3. SAFETY & COMMUNITY WELL-BEING		
3.1 Form a new neighborhood watch in the vicinity of Morris Ave and Taylor St., and promote coordination and communication among neighborhood watches.	Short Term	WBTF-SWBC RESIDENTS CITY
3.2 Provide training at neighborhood watch / association meetings to help us to identify and to assist our at-risk older friends and neighbors. The City has already made great strides in identifying the at-risk senior population in the area.	Short Term	WBTF-SWBC CITY ISU GAPNA OTNA
3.3 Work with the United States Postal Service to establish and to advertise a Carrier Alert Program to monitor the well-being of our elderly and disabled neighbors.	Medium Term	WBTF-SWBC ISU GAPNA OTNA
3.4 Make a lighting inventory and make note of any missing/broken street lamps, and install light fixtures along all alleys, streets, sidewalks and bike paths that need them.	Medium Term	WBTF-SWBC CITY RESIDENTS

IMPLEMENTATION

3.5 Trim trees in both the public right-of-way and on private property to ensure that branches are not blocking street lamps.	Short Term	WBTF-SWBC CITY RESIDENTS
3.6 Install new rail crossing safety gates at at-grade rail crossings in our area.	Long Term	WBTF-SWBC CITY OTNA
3.7 Consider reopening Jefferson St. to through-traffic and adding traffic calming measures on Al-lin St. near Friendship Park.	Medium Term	WBTF-SWBC CITY OTNA
3.8 Continue to train police, neighborhood watches to detect/deter elder abuse.	Short Term	WBTF-SWBC CITY ISU GAPNA OTNA
3.9 Start “Turn the Porch Light On” campaign to help deter and deter crime.	Short Term	WBTF-SWBC GAPNA OTNA
3.10 Utilize design to facilitate surveillance and to reduce crime.	Ongoing	WBTF-SWBC CITY RESIDENTS
3.11 Work with the City to distribute pamphlets explaining the importance of making all building numbers large, illuminated and easily visible from the street, as required per City Code.	Short Term	WBTF-SWBC CITY OTNA GAPNA
3.12 Encourage community watch groups to actively report code violations to the City.	Short Term	WBTF-SWBC OTNA GAPNA RESIDENTS
3.13 Address safety issues arising after home foreclosures have already occurred.	Short Term	CITY GAPNA OTNA

IMPLEMENTATION

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Retain existing employers, encourage them to expand their operations in this area, and recruit new employers to the Westside.	Ongoing	WBTF-EDC EDC CITY
4.2 Together with the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System, explore the feasibility of creating an “Early Hours” public transit program.	Medium Term	WBTF-EDC BNPT MCRP
4.3 Together with the Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System, explore the feasibility of adding Sunday transit service.	Medium Term	WBTF-EDC BNPT MCRP
4.4 Partner with the EDC, ISU and IWU to encourage new business start-ups and local cooperative enterprises.	Ongoing	WBTF-EDC EDC ISU IWU
4.5 Market and rebrand the Westside/Market Street/Downtown area and seek destination stores and restaurants in this key central area of Bloomington.	Short Term	WBTF-EDC EDC CITY
4.6 Enhance workforce development programming and training for our residents.	Medium Term	WBTF-EDC EDC D87 HCC

5. HOUSING

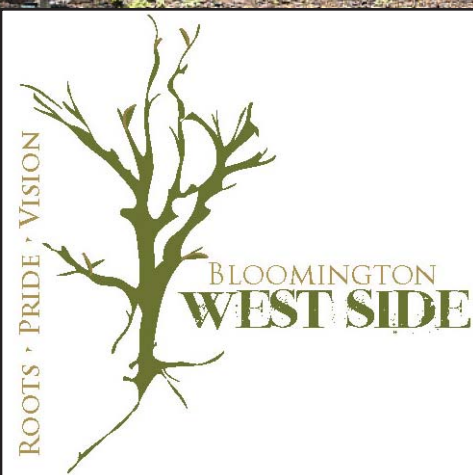
5.1 Develop housing for a wide range of incomes and households.	Long Term	WBTF-HC HHMC BHA MCCA
5.2 Build and rehabilitate accessible residential dwellings for seniors and persons with disabilities.	Long Term	WBTF-HC HHMC BHA MCCA

IMPLEMENTATION

5.3 Work with major employers to provide Employer Assisted Housing.	Medium Term	WBTF-HC SFB AFNI
5.4 Revitalize vacant homes and return them to full occupancy.	Long Term	WBTF-HC MCCA HHMC CITY
5.5 Work with owners of historic homes to connect them with funding sources, such as federal tax credits and county tax freezes, to help preserve and restore these houses.	Short Term	WBTF-HC CITY MCCA
5.6 Establish affordable live/work studios.	Long Term	WBTF-HC MCCA CITY
5.7 Educate landlords and tenants on their respective rights and responsibilities.	Short Term	WBTF-HC CITY HHMC MCCA BHA
5.8 Connect residents to grants for financing green housing retrofits and weatherization projects.	Medium Term	WBTF-HC CITY MCCA
5.9 Support mixed-use buildings with first floor retail and residential units above in select business clusters in our community.	Medium Term	WBTF-HC CITY
5.10 Assist homeowners in our neighborhood at risk for or facing foreclosure.	Short Term	WBTF-HC EDC MCCA
5.11 Work with the City to continue to enforce the building code.	Short Term	WBTF-HC CITY
5.12 Assist would-be homeowners through education and counseling programs.	Medium Term	WBTF-HC BHA MCCA HHMC

IMPLEMENTATION

5.13 Continue to support local initiatives to meet the housing needs of the challenged population.	Ongoing	WBTF-HC BHA MCCA HHMC
5.14 Investigate adopting a vacant building ordinance to fight blight.	Short Term	WBTF-HC CITY
5.15 Explore the use of CDBG funds to provide a matching pool for owners of apartment buildings to make necessary renovations.	Medium Term	CITY OTNA GAPNA
6. EDUCATION		
6.1 Develop life skills educational programs for adult members of our community.	Medium Term	WBTF-EC MPBC D87 ISU
6.2 Provide counsel to our junior high and high school students on post-high school educational planning.	Short Term	WBTF-EC D87 ISU IWU
6.3 Continue to utilize our neighborhood school facilities for community use after school and on weekends.	Short Term	WBTF-EC D87
6.4 Bring library services to the heart of our Westside community.	Long Term	WBTF-EC BPL GAPNA OTNA
6.5 Initiate educational courses and programs geared toward seniors.	Medium Term	WBTF-EC MPBC ISU IWU
6.6 Enhance access to educational opportunities beyond our neighborhood by providing low-cost transportation to facilities located throughout Bloomington-Normal.	Medium Term	WBTF-EC CITY BNPT MPBC



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